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Ontario Hydro-Electric Power Commission, 1922-1924

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J. ALLAN ROSS
Commissioner

[Miscellaneous documents]

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INTERVIEW

WITH SIR JOHN HENDRIE

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May 9th. 1923

SIR JOHN HENDRIE - I want to qualify my statement as regards "lukewarm." Following Mr. Gregory's remarks, I think Mr. Lloyd Harris also asked questions in regard to the power developments and the starting of the radials, and Mr. Gregory asked me what was my attitude at that time towards the Hydro, and I used the word "lukewarm." I saw in the Press that the Chairman of the Commission assumed that he had a lukewarm Commissioner on the Board with him--at least this is what I read between the lines.of his remarks. During the time of the transmission line when power was bought and transmitted and sold to the municipalities it was a sound, sane proposition. It was after that that you could apply the word to my attitude to the Hydro cause--Hydro-Electric power and Hydro Radials.

MR. GREGORY: You spoke about some estimates being submitted to the Commission, by the Engineer, as to the cost of certain works being undertaken on behalf of certain municipalities. Would you mind telling us what you knowledge as a member of the Board was as to the course some times followed?

A - Well, sometimes--of course as a Commissioner I have to take the responsibility myself; I can't help it, and you can say 'he was there and why didn't he object," but there are occasions when estimates were made which were not suitable in the view of the Chief Commissioner and I understand they were ordered to be changed, whether in view of more power to be taken which would relieve the overhead and cheapen the power, or by other means by giving them power at a lesser rate at the power house where it emme in off the lines, I could not say.

Q - What was the object in making the change?

A - Well, I presume, it was to make it agreeable to the municipalities to carry the by-laws.

Q - That is, if the change were not made the municipalities might not be willing to enter into an agreement?

A -It might look sweeter to them

Q - I think you have spoken to us about the submission of estimates by the Hydro Commission to the Government. Am I right in saying that you hold the view they should be submitted in more detail?

A - Exactly what I said at the previous meeting that the estimates should be brought down,by a responsible man of the Commission or a Minister representing the Commission, in detail and explained in detail to the House, and brought down at the time the other Ministers' estimates are brought down; not only estimates for capital but estimates for management of the Commission. There is a certain amount put in for Commission management and then an amount for the capital expenditures

SIR JOHN HENNIKER - I want to qualify my statement as regards "lineware." Following Mr. Gregory's remarks, I think Mr. Lloyd Harris also asked questions in regard to the power developments and the starting of the radials. and Mr. Gregory asked me what was my attitude at that time towards the Hydro, and I used the word "lineware." I saw in the Press that the Chairman of the Commission answered that he had a lineware Commissioner on the Board with him-- at least this is what I read between the lines of his remarks. During the time of the transmission line when power was bought and transmitted and sold to the municipalities it was a sound, sane proposition. It was after that that you would apply the word to my attitude to the Hydro owned-- Hydro-Electric power and Hydro Radials.

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besides. I think the Commission used for services $160,000 in the old days. It relieved the municipalities of certain amount of expenditure. There were estimates made of lines we did not think would ever pay to build, and the engineers so reported.

Q - In short you think the estimates should be submitted in full--in as full detail as those of a Department?

A - Yes, by some responsible Minister.

Q - Would that be the Minister - a member of the Commission?

A - Not necessarily. The Prime Minister could take it up or give it to one of his Ministers; but there should be a Minister in touch with the Prime Minister on the Commission.

Q -Should a Minister always be a member of the Commission?

A - I think he should, otherwise how-----even in the past when there was a Minister in connection with the Commission we did not hear everything.

Q - Do you think the Attorney-General is a proper representative on the Commission?

A - No, sir, I do not think any Minister receiving other emolument should be on the Commission.

Q - That is, no Minister who receives a salary as Minister?

A - A Minister without portfolio.

Q - The Commissioner should be a Minister; not necessarily the Chief Commissioner.

Q - A Minister might do something as a member of the Commission and then have to deal with it in some capacity as the Minister?

A - Yes.

Q - such as would be the case in an application to the Attorney-General for a fiat?

A - It would be an anomalous position for him to place himself in.

Q - It might be to sue the Commission for an act to which he had been a party?

A - Yes.

Q - And does the Minister receive emoluments from the Commission itself distinct from the salary as a Minister?

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Commission itself distinct from the salary as a Minister?

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Q - Mr. Lucas for instance. Carmichael is not head of a Department in the Government; he does not receive any salary. Would the Attorney-General draw two salaries:

MR. HANEY: I think he would

SIR JOHN MENDRIE: You could ascertain from another witness about that. Look up the Blue Book and see.
I also think that salaries of subsidiary companies, acquired by the Hydro Commission, should be reported to the Government and under Government control.

MR. HANEY: And approved by the Government?

A - Yes, because it is an act of business. They acquired the stock in trust and immediately voted itself and the Chief Engineer money from the Ontario Power Company.

MR. GREGORY: You think these improper?

A - Yes. It would have been proper if the Government had been notified and had approved of it and made it legal, but otherwise it was improper.

Q - Was it at any time the practice, when you were a member of the Commission, for the Chairman to make any announcements of its policy without first conferring with his colleagues on the Board?

A - Yes, often he announced certain things but he would probably deny it. We never heard of it until we saw it passing through the Legislature in the form of a Bill.

Q - Although you were a member of the Government?
A - Yes.

Q - I think you said something about proper notice being given to municipalities ~~xx~~ before any legislation affecting them is introduced?

A - I think that is important. that any bill brought into the House regarding Hydro Radials or the Power Commission, or any proposed legislation should be sent to all the municipalities that are affected thereby. This may affect their financial standing with the Hydro.

MR. HANEY: And approved by them before it becomes law?
A - Yes, and approved by them before it goes back for its second reading

MR. GREGORY: If it is not approved, then notice of its disapproval should be given. You could hardly give the municipalities a veto on legislation.

A - No, but you could say that if they disapproved they should be heard in their behalf.

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Q - Have you in mind any instances where a measure has been introduced and legislation passed without the knowledge of the municipalities?

A - Well, probably legislation that occurred mostly between 1914 and 1920. But in the case of the radial legislation that was introduced even last January we had to have two or three lawyers and the City Clerk and other people engaged for nearly a week to find out what that legislation meant before we could vote on it, and we had to pay $1200 for advertising it before it was voted on.

Q - What do you think of the practice of introducing validating Acts?

A - I think it is improper. I think the Government, who are going to be responsible for the financing to carry on the project, should be consulted before any project is developed.

Q - Sometimes perhaps the Government might be consulted but the Legislature would know nothing about it?

A - Well, the reports could be brought down if the Legislature is not sitting.

Q- Would you think this might be sound: To lay down this rule that these acts should not be done before legislation, authorizing them to be done, shouuld be enacted?

A - Yes, that is right; just the same as any other legislation.

MR. GREGORY: If any of us do anything contrary to the law we might not find the Government obliging enough to help us out.

What should be done in order to remove this constant friction between the Government of the day and the Commission?

A - If the Government, who are responsible for the funds, are not satisfied with the way the Commission is managing the affairs entrusted to them b y the Government and the municipalities, they should seriously consider what change they should make in the personnel of the Commission. Is that too strong, Mr. Maney?

MR. MANEY: I would go further; I would say they should remove them

MR. R. A. ROSS - They have that power.